



The Commission`s support on the objectives of the European Declaration on Alternatives to Surgical Castration of Piglets

Denis Simonin
Animal Welfare
Directorate for Health and Food Safety

The European Declaration - Background

- **Directive on the protection of pigs allows the castration of males**
 - < 7 days => without anaesthesia
 - >7 days => castration by a veterinarian under anaesthesia + prolonged analgesia
- 2004: **Surgical procedure inflicts pain and discomfort**, even in very young pigs - EFSA (2004)
- 2010: **Declaration on alternatives to surgical castration of pigs on a voluntary basis** by European farmers, meat industry, retailers, scientists, veterinarians and animal welfare NGOs endorsed the European



The European Declaration - Background

- **2011**
 - Adoption of a **work program to support technical, scientific and educational measures** to **identify and introduce** alternatives to surgical castration of pigs
 - Presentation of the European declaration on alternatives to surgical castration of pigs
- **2012**
 - An Expert group is established.

This declaration represents an example of voluntary initiative proposed by the most important EU sector of animal production in the field of animal welfare



Expert Group on ending surgical castration of pigs

- Meeting of the expert group: twice a year
- **Responsibilities based on the declaration in four expert teams:**
 - Reporting annual progress
 - Communication
 - Training and Information
 - specifying a list of "traditional products"
- Members: Copa-Cocega, EFFAB, Breiz Europe, ANAS, FESASS, Danish Bacon & Meat Council, UECEBV, CLITRACI, QS, Eurocommerce, INRA, Wageningen LEI, DMRI, Eurogroup for Animals, FEV, Dutch Steering Group of Castration, IFAH, Ministry of Health (Belgium)



Main points in the European Declaration

1. Goal to **end castration by 2018**
2. Use of anaesthesia and/or analgesia from 2012
3. To ensure that the following tools are available:
 - Mutually recognized methods for the assessment of boar taint
 - European recognized **reference methods** for the measurement of boar taint
 - **Rapid detection methods** for boar taint at slaughter plants
 - **Reduction of boar taint** compounds by pig breeding and/or management and feeding



Main points in the Declaration

3. Derogation for specialised productions

4. The implementation of the end of surgical castration

- by ensuring a **sustainable and competitive pig meat chain** in the EU
- by assessing the **costs for implementing the end** of surgical castration and cost sharing between the economic actors of the chain
- by publishing an **annual public report** assessing the progress
- by performing or **coordinating research** and development



Priority actions

1. Ensure the **acceptance of products** from non-castrated pigs in the EU and in Third Countries (\Rightarrow *Studies*)
2. Agree on a **common understanding** of boar taint (\Rightarrow workshop, publications..)
3. Perform or coordinate research and development
4. Develop **information and training for farmers** and other members of the pork chain (\Rightarrow *Expert team*)
5. **Cost/benefit analysis** on the consequences of the end of surgical castration (change in production costs, costs/benefits at the different levels, cost sharing plans) \Rightarrow *see Study of Cost and Benefit*
6. Develop a **list of traditional productions** requiring heavier pigs (\Rightarrow *Expert team*)



Role of the Commission

Scientific studies:

- Four studies completed:
 - ❖ Economic analysis of the **costs** and **benefits** of ending surgical castration of pigs:
 - December 2013
 - Estimation of economic impact until 2018: **entire pigs increase of net benefits**
 - ❖ Development of **reference methods**
 - May 2014
 - **Two methods could serve as a reference** for the monitoring of the contents of indole, skatole and androstenone at their sensorial threshold levels



Role of the Commission

- ❖ Rapid detection methods for slaughter plants
 - August 2014
 - Instrumental method evaluation: **No suitable methods available**
 - Human Nose method: seems the best method in this moment

- ❖ Consumer acceptance in the EU and in third countries of meat obtained from pigs not surgically castrated
 - August 2014
 - Pilot sensory study: Skatols levels more strongly affected consumer acceptance than androstenone levels, Preference for meat from castrated pigs
 - Survey Study: Animal Welfare is in a number of country the second most important motive!!

 - => tool for the industry to decide the level of acceptance/risk of skatole and androstenone



Possible future actions

- **Further studies**

- Reduction of boar taint by breeding, feeding and management techniques (ongoing)
- Alternatives for traditional productions requiring heavier pigs
- Prototype for detecting boar taint in slaughterhouses

- **Educational initiatives**

- Meeting on **21 January** with the Member States
- Workshop on "Alternatives to the surgical castration of pigs"
– **26 February 2015** (Registration open)
- Fifth expert group meeting – **March 2015**



European
Commission

Thank you for your attention!



Health and
Food Safety